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# Newspaper Framing of the Nigerian Armed Forces Operation Python Dance II in South-East Nigeria

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## I. Introduction

### a) Background to the study

The South-East geopolitical zone in recent time experienced some form of crimes, expression, and agitation of discontentment by its indigenes this could be a reaction to the perceived disadvantaged position of the region in Nigeria. This led the military in carrying out the Operation Python Dance with the aim to maintain peace and order in the country. The operation python dance had two faces; the first face was conducted in the south-east from 27 November to 27 December 2016. The face two was also carried out the south-east from September 15 to October 15, 2017. According to the Deputy Director, Public Relations, 82 Division of the Nigerian Army, Col Sagir Musa, "the exercise was aimed at fighting crime in the area". Col Sagir Musa in his statement said that the military had, apart from dealing with emerging security challenges, including violent agitations and insurgency, herdsmen clashes, cultism peculiar to the zone, including kidnapping, armed robbery and communal crises among others, engaged in medical outreaches to communities as well as other humanitarian activities. The essence of the exercise He said, "On Friday, September 15, 2017, in 82 Division area of responsibility, simultaneous activities started in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Cross River states without hitch. The essence of the exercise is to enhance troops' preparedness and proficiency in dealing with emerging security challenges peculiar to the South-Eastern region, such as kidnappings, armed robbery, communal crisis, farmers-herdsmen clashes, cultism, violent agitations, and insurgency, among others.

After the announcement of Operation Python Dance II, the mass media sustained reports on the issue using different and recurring frames. National dailies and their broadcast counterparts were giving different reports on the abduction, for instance, the false story of the military injecting chickenpox vaccine to citizens during their medical outreach. According to Gadarian (2010, p.8) "the emotional content, not simply the factual information in media reports, has a sizeable and statistically significant influence on attitudes". Boystun, Gross and Resnik (2004, p.2) argue that the way media organizations and media gatekeepers systematize and present the events and the issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided with, are products of media framing. Okoro and Odoemelam (2013, p.86) add that the act of framing shape perception of key events. The implication of this is that people who rely on media for information and decision-making can be easily influenced by framing this is agreed by Auerbach and Bloch cited in Okoro (2013) "that the public's lack of awareness, along with their reliance on the media for information and decision making, make them more likely to be influenced by framing". As Auerbach and Block – Elkon (2005) observe:

> When the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. The media increase or decrease the salience of issues, which allows the public to remember and make judgments on such issues. Framing assumes that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members think about the situation (p.13).

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According to Tejumaiye, (2005, p.144-155) "The influence and power of the press in building, unifying or destroying a nation-state, particularly a complex multi-cultural and multi- linguistic society such as Nigeria is all possible with its framing" This, explains Anyanwu's (2004) and Ohaja's (2005) positions that whatever the audience makes of media information or messages is determined by the way such messages are mediated. Therefore, how newspapers present any issues should be of concern to the media in general and newspaper operators in particular.

The midpoint of media frames in Okoro and Odoemelam, (2013, p.86). According to them, "In news media, news frames serve as journalistic tools through which journalists recount a story in a limited amount of space and place an event, within its broader context". For Hallahan, using a framing metaphor, a news frame can be interpreted as a "window or portrait frame drawn around information that delimits the subject matter and, thus, focuses attention on key elements within". The press is essentially seen by the kind of frames they bring to the public. These frames could create some sorts of untrue pictures when imagined in our minds. Lippmann (cited in Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2008, p. 52) aver "that news is responsible for providing the pseudo-environment upon which people rely to experience and understand events they cannot observe directly and that news frames are important in how these events are reported since they reflect a process of recurring selection and emphasis in communicating perceived reality". Media frames, according to them are equally relied upon to interpret news items. And how these items are interpreted, determines the kind of pictures that will be placed in our minds. The obvious question is, what kind of frames did the news media use in operation python dance by the Nigeria armed forces in southeast Nigeria?

Different Studies on this topic made good attempts to explain the role the mass media played in reporting the operation python dance with emphasis on frequency and volume and how the audience perceived the functions of the mass media in this regard, no study has been able to present the frames used by the newspapers and the attendant implications of the frames. This study, therefore, fills the study gap by studying different frames used by the newspapers on Operation Python Dance II.

## II. Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian Army, between September 15 to October 15, 2017, embarked on another exercise in the south-east geo-political zone, codenamed Operation Python Dance II. This came at a time tension was already mounting following the renewed activities of the pro-Biafra agitators (IPOB). Various interpretations were imputed to this exercise; some said it was meant to intimidate the people of south-east in view of secessionists' demand for a referendum towards the actualization of a Biafra republic, others alleged that it alligns with the policy of the All Progressives Congress, APC-led federal government to further marginalise the south-east people.

At the peak of this tension, the mass media, particularly the print, used different frames to convey reports of the mood to their audiences. The ways these frames were used in various reports, no doubt, have some effects or influences on the audience. This is because there is an established relationship between media frames and audience perception of issues. However, there seemed to be a widespread suspicion about the media being a militatry tool, and using different frames in reporting stories on Operation Python Dance II in the south-east. It is believed that the press were biased and not objective in reporting these stories.

Another missing link in all of these is that available studies on the Operation Python Dance II focused more on audience's opinion about the way the media reported the exercise without regard to the frames employed by the media in their coverage. Researchers have addressed several issues in the coverage of Operation Python Dance II, but the focus of the press in the reportage of the events that transpired during and after the operation is not known. Given the stipulation of the framing theory that issues are understood based on the way the media focuses on and reports them, this research effort therefore seeks to ascertain the dominant frames used by the newspapers in their coverage of the Operation Python Dance II.

## III. Research Questions

1. What is the dominant frame used by the Nigeria Newspapers in their coverage of Operation Python Dance II?
2. What is the level of prominence given to stories on Operation Python Dance II?
3. What kind of tone/direction were used to report stories on Operation Python Dance II?
4. What is the length/volume of Operation Python Dance II related stories?
5. What is the level of interpretation and focus given to stories on Operation Python Dance II?

## IV. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research srudy can be grouped under two headings: theoretical and practical significance.

*Theoretical significance:* Two media effects theory were found suitable for this work and they are framing and agenda-setting theory. When this work is completed, it will help to broaden our understanding of media effects on people.

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*Practical significance:* First it will be beneficial to journalists and media practitioners as they will be made to understand that certain frames used in reporting events can have an effect on audience. Also, this work will be an addition to existing literature on operation pytho dance II. As such, futher research on media frames can be chaneled towards audience perception and whst ifluences journalists' chioce of frames used in reporting events that occur in the society.

Furthermore, it is expected that through this study the government band its agencies will realize the significance oof media involement in crisis, conflicts, prevention, resolution and transformation. To further offer suggestions on media reforms that can ehance a better appreciated statutory regulations of the media.

## V. Scope of Study

The study is limited to issues of Operation Python Dance II in south-east Nigeria including Port Harcourt between 15th September 2017 and 15th October 2017 by selected Newspapers in Nigeria. The kind of news the research is out to analyze are the once that carries the word python dance II on the title or in the body. It does not include issue of secession by agitators, such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Movement of the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), or issue of hate speech or dissatisfaction by an individual or group because of the current system of government.

The study is specifically concerned with the coverage of Operation Python Dance II by Nigerian newspapers in terms of framing. The newspapers selected for this study include *Daily Trust, Daily Sun, The Guardian* and *The Nation*

*Definition of Terms*

- Framing: The manner in which the media present particular news, to show its importance over other news in other to get audience attention on the particular issue.
- Newspaper: A newspaper is "a publication issued at regular and usually close intervals, especially daily or weekly, and commonly containing news, comment, features and advertising" (dictionary.com). For the purpose of this study the term newspaper will be used to address these four dailies (*Daily Trust, The Guardian, Daily Sun and Vanguard)*
- Operation Python Dance II: Is a military operation with the mandate to check kidnappings, robberies, cultism, and of course secessionist agitations in Southeast Nigeria.
- OPD II: Operation Python Dance II
- Armed Forces: The combination of a countries Military, air force, and naval.
- Military: Part of a nations armed forces, authorized to use weapons and deadly force to defend and protect a nation.
- Military Operations: Is the coordinated *military actions* of a *state*, or a *non-state actor,* in response to a developing situation. These actions are designed as a *military plan* to resolve the situation in the state or actor's favor.

## VI. Literature Review

*a) Media Framing*

The definition of framing has varied widely among researchers Gamson and Modigliani (1987) cited in Baysha and Hallahan (2004, p.234) define a media frame "as a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events". Ngoa (2012, p.13) sees framing as "a means through which an issue is given a particular meaning", Ngoa (2012, p.13) further explains that: Framing, therefore, means the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. In social constructivism, two types of media frames exist – the episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar 1991 cited in Baysha and Hallanan 2004, p.24). Episodic framing according to Baysha and Hallanan (p. 234) "depicts public issues as concrete instances or specific events that are the results of actions by individuals." In thematic media frames, issues are usually reported in a more abstract level as a form of general outcomes. In any case, the type of media framing usually influences how the audience attributes responsibility.

According to Entman (1993, p.52) framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. According to Epkins (2011, p.19), Framing describes the process of content selection and exclusion, highlighting certain aspects over others to communicate a particular point of view. In many ways, a frame facilitates the nature of an argument. Specifically, communicating a certain bent, context, or angle of an issue that, in itself, lends an interpretive meaning of the communication.

As Jameson & Waldman (2003, p.1) put it, "journalists deliver the world to citizens in a comprehension form". Some scholars as Bowen (2008, p.339) argue that framing "tells us how to interpret communication." To Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p.143) a frame is a "central organizing idea or storyline" that serves to contextualize issue or debate. Reese



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(2001. p.49) sees frames as organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world. Gitlin (1980, p.389) pointed out

> That the definitional power of frames relates to the general concerns over the power of the news media to shape and reinforce dominant ideology. Some aspect omitted in the frame does not come to the audience attention. Therefore framing determines were the audience puts its attention. An effective framing taps into the pre existing beliefs, attitudes and opinions, it highlights certain accepts of an issue over others.

To Gitlin, news frames represent persistent patterns of selection, emphasis, and exclusion that furnish a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events. Norris, Kern and Just (2003, p.2) states that the idea of 'news frames' refers to interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context, they further explained, that news frames bundle key concepts, stock phrases, and iconic images to reinforce certain common ways of interpreting developments.

Norris et al (2003) go on to say decisions and common practices in newsgathering - determining what and how stories are covered do contribute toward these frames. Out of the myriad ways of describing events in the world, journalists rely upon familiar news frames, and upon the credible sources, to convey dominant meanings, to make sense of the facts, to focus the headlines, and to structure the storyline. They further note that the way journalists observe and report each event is shaped by how similar events have been covered in the past and by the reporter's most trusted sources of information. The conventional frame which becomes mainstream in the news media, provide contextual curves, giving meaning and order to complex problems, actions, and events, by slotting the new into familiar categories or story line pegs.

*b) Framing Research*

The concept framing research according to Scheufele (1999) can be broken down into research examining frames as independent or dependent variables. Studies of frames as dependent variables have examined the role of various factors in influencing the creation or modification of frames while studies in which frames serve as independent variables typically are more interested in the effects of framing.

In carrying out a framing research, one should identity a particular approach to framing and then specifies goals for framing research (Anderson, 2008, p. 7). According to Pan and Kosicki (2002) there are two approaches to study of fames: either as a strategy or a characteristic of the discourse itself. The approach to study of frames as a strategy involves an inquiry into the strategy used by journalists and sources to create texts. The second approach looks at the meanings audiences derive from the texts. Given the scope of this study, it is not feasible to utilize each approach. This study will take the first approach, but not withstanding will hopefully reflect the spirit of each approach in the final findings.

In addition, D'Angelo (2002) posits that a framing research has to achieve a certain goal. The author indicates goals that a framing research might achieve. These are: identifying the frames, discovering how frames interact with individuals, and examining how frames shape public opinion/policy debate. This study is interested in achieving the first stated goal and work toward partial completion of the remainder of the goals. To determine what creates frames, study must directly examine the practices of journalistic as well as public figures to understand precisely the process by which frames come to be present in texts. This process would simply be beyond the scope of this stud and will only provide an overview of the positions of various prominent groups in this debate in order to contextualize the media's framing of those positions. The answer to the question of how frames interact with individuals can only be provided by survey or utilization direct observation of individuals who have the opportunity to interact with manipulated texts in order to determine what effect framing might have on individual perception. This study will not involve itself with that also. This is because the primary goals of any frame research is identifying frame (D'Angelo, 2002).

Frame, according to Gitlin (1980) means selection (and omission) and salience of certain features of content which create an overall theme for each article. Theme is understood as distinct and unifying idea which pervades the discourse contained in the article. Related to the above, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) suggest a deductive approach to identifying frames. This involves "predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news" (p. 94). They further indicate that frames prior to analyzing texts, rather than letting the texts convey frames to the reader (the inductive approach), frame research can be more easily replicated and better able to detect differences between media source. To further prove the relevance of deductive approach to frame research Anderson (2008) explains.

This type of standardization in the field of framing research can benefit the body of framing knowledge because it aids in the replication, verifiability and comparability of results. Second, the common frames include many of the salient features of the debate over security/crisis and therefore should yield significant results. Finally, it gives the opportunity to verifying or discrediting the deductive method as an appropriate approach to studying frame (p.8). In the light of the above facts, this study will adopt the deductive approach to identifying the frames.

Entman (1993) argues that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments



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and suggest remedies. Faming essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text" (p. 52). Related to the above, Pan and Kosicki (2002) identify three framing players: sources, journalists and audience members. They argue that there players engage in an interactive and circular process of creating, conferring and receiving frames through the course of public debate over certain topics.

To Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) five frames "largely account for all the frames that have been found in the new" (p. 95). This claim as the result of their findings on the research conducted on a review of framing literature, frames in news. These five frames are: the conflict frame, the human interest frame, the economic consequences frame, the morality frame and responsibility frame.

*c) Review of Opinions*

Review of opinion is a member commentary based directly on actual user experience, sharing of ideas and observations that do not necessary involve firsthand experience from using a product or service.

*d) Mass Media and National Security in Nigeria*

The mass media are by definition, the whole gamut of information dissemination institutions and agencies in a political system. They operate by dispensing information to the populace on all aspects and actions of state and governance (Utor, 2000 cited in Abagen, 2009, p.42). According to Asemah (2011, p.18), mass media could be described as "the channels or technological devices through which messages are conveyed to a large and heterogeneous audience. They are the vehicles that are used for conveying messages from a source to a large destination. In addition, mass media are the devices for moving messages across distance or time to accomplish mass communication."

Therefore, mass media constitute all the means through which messages are relayed from different aspects of the society to a large, heterogeneous and anonymous audience at the same time. Security and national security have been defined by different scholars. Walter Lippmann (1943) says a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war. Charles Maier (1990) notes that national security is best defined as the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity, and well-being (cited in Olayiwola, 2013, p.31). Olayiwola explains that "it is now widely acknowledged that without a safe and secure environment, there can be neither sustainable, poverty-reducing economic and social development nor political development. Therefore, the mass media need to cover all the aspects of security mentioned above in their reportage and coverage." According to Ali (2013), national security means the protection of the lives, rights, dignity, and property of citizens. It also means the protection of resources, cultural integrity, territory, sovereignty and lawful institutions of a country.

National security goes beyond from military threat and political coercion. It has a deeper meaning that has to do with citizens and the way they relate with each other. This idea springs from the popular axiom charity begins at home. It is also said that a house divided against it selves cannot stand. Nigeria's national security means the protection of its resources, territory, sovereignty and lawful institutions of the country. The aim of national security is to secure the just and equitable living conditions of the country. Former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in appreciation of the need for closer co-operation and collaboration among the various security agencies and all other components that make up the Nigerian society stated in March 2001, that:

> The concept of national security shall be the aggregation of the security intrest of the individuals, communities, ethnic groups, political entities and institutions which inhabit the territory of our great country, Nigeria.

The President went further to identify the primary objectives of national security as:

> To strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to advance her interest and objectives, to contain instability, control crime, Eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development progress and growth, and improve the welfare and wellbeing and quality of life of every citizen. (Wali 2003 p.50)

The media is a principal player in the arena of national security. National security has been greatly threatened since independence. When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the mass media orientation shifted towards reinforcing tribal and sectional loyalties in preference to national unity, identity and integration. The media became parochial in their content. They dedicate themselves to the articulation of particular ethnic interest (Udoudo & Asak 2008: 4)) Press reports during this period greatly heightened tension, which created suspicion among the citizenry and almost led to the disintegration of the corporate existence of the country. Udoudo and Asak noted that:

> The news media seemed to have abandoned their core duty of truthfully reporting events, activities and personalities. Instead they joined the fray, individual taking sides either in favour or against the government in power. (Udoudo & Asak, 2008: p.5).

The function of the press in any given society includes surveillance of the environment, correlation of the component of society in responding to the



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environment and transmission of the social heritage. (Wali, 2003: p.17) The media functions as watchdog capable of blowing the whistle to call attention to serious national issues. This implies a clear recognition of the fact that the media plays an important role on issues of national security. The power of the media to decide what the people should read, see or hear has never been in doubt. What has been in the centre of controversy is the capacity of those in whose hands reside such enormous powers to use that power judiciously and in public interest.

Media professionals have the options to use the power of media instruments in their hands either to serve the nation or indulge in self-propelled interest. The media ought to be objective as it carries out its functions. Mainly because of its social role in informing and educating the masses the Nigerian press is always made to be seen at the centre of any national crisis. This has caused the Nigerian media to be reduced overtime to mere tools in the hands of the governing class to legitimize and perpetuate their illegitimate rule. The political class has found it easy to impose its will on the media because of the challenges that media practitioners had to face in the course of discharging their duties. Such challenges include poor remunerations, poor conditions of service, job insecurity, nepotism, exposure to hazards, inadequate facilities for research and development and so on. (Ofuafor 2008: p.1)

The recent crimes, expression, and agitation of discontentment by indigenes in the south- east is a looming threat to national security and the citizens are no longer comfortable, which is the result of the military to embark on Operation Python Dance II. The clamoring is a sign of dissatisfaction with the whole process of governance and the media is the best means to propagate it. Security is part of public interest and a mass media professional must have a genuine interest in people. The primary focus of a mass media is on issues that benefit the general public and uphold fairness, justice, national unity and international co-operation. (Gambo in Akinfeleye, 2003: 12)

In recent times the Nigerian media tended to pose inherent dangers to national security in connection with politics, religion, ethnicity, power and revenue sharing which are crucial to a stable and enduring democracy. On the political sphere newsmen are expected to report about the activities of the politicians and are expected to feed the public with objective information. The newsmen are expected to nose around for information beyond the ovation at political rallies. The media are expected to reflect balanced views of the opposing party. But most media houses do focus attention mostly on the ruling and bigger parties to the detriment of the smaller ones. While newsmen are not expected to be public relation officers to party, some chief executive of media houses often take side with political parties (The Monitor, Tue, Feb. 18, 2003, 26).

Nigeria could advance her cultural and technological heritage if it could instill national consciousness on its citizens via the media and an ideology or a belief system which a political party utilizes as a way of mobilizing people. The media is capable of mobilizing people to achieve the desired objective of the state. This view is articulated by Nzimiro:

> Mobilizing of people through ideological exposure implies the political education into the socio-cultural factors which govern their behavior to produce in them a sense of pride in themselves and patriotism for the collective good as well as a belief that they are capable of mastering their own destiny by controlling nature and organizing themselves.(Nzimiro, in Akinfeleye 2003: 31)

Unfortunately however, the media which ought to be a major stake holder in ensuring the security of the state sometimes trivialize this very sensitive issue as stated by Wali:

> The Nigerian press is yet to grow in maturity. Issues that affect the general well-being of the people of the country but which can cause disaffection and disunity should be de- emphasized or played down. The reverse has been the case in many Nigerian publications wishing to make quick sales on the platform of sensationalism and journalist scoops (Wali, 2003: p.69 ).

The above assertion is very true. The media publish issues that are trivial but appealing to them and that will enrich them and ignore or pay little attention to the salient ones. These are activities which the media need to desist from to make a meaningful impact in combating insecurity in Nigeria; otherwise, the mass media will continue to be seen as fueling insecurity.

*e) Empirical Review*

This part of the study will x-ray previous empirical research works that relate to the subject (s) under study. The review of relevant literature will be done paragraph by paragraph and they will be based on the study. Eti (2012) carried out such a study on how newspapers interpret crises issues in Nigeria through their reportage, the researcher adopted the content analytical method to examine how Nigerian newspapers report crises issues such as: violence, kidnapping and hostage taking. The paper content analyzed *The Champion, The Punch* and *New Nigerian* newspapers. She focused on newspapers' headlines and concluded that, reporting of crises situations like bombing, violent and kidnapping in the Nigerian press is episodic in nature.

In another similar study by Chime-Nganya, Ezeji, and Ezegwu (2017) on framing of IPOB and Nigeria Army clash in the South East and its influence on



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the audience. The study reveals that news stories were used mainly in the reports of IPOB and Nigeria Army clash in the four newspapers studied. The study also found that newspapers employed different frames in their coverage of the clash but Biafra agitators frame was dominantly used followed by Biafran group frames. The study concludes that the audiences perceived the framing of IPOB/Nigeria Army clash as a conspiracy against the South East. In this regard, the study recommended that Nigerian journalists should do more by critically interpreting and investigating issues in a crisis situation, instead of depending on straight news stories, since most of the straight news stories are 'copy and paste'. Nigerian newspapers should employ more positive frame or therapeutic language should be used when reporting crisis; this will facilitate the peaceful resolution of such conflicts or crisis.

Akowe (2010) used qualitative analysis to find out the varying degrees of three Nigerian newspapers coverage of the Niger Delta crisis within April 2009. His findings show a whopping 672 stories published by the sampled newspapers within the three months period. The finding is not much different from that of Krieghbaum conducted in the late 1970s. Krieghbaum (1979), applying content analytical method in his study, "Three Miles Island Coverage: a Crash Course for Readers" found out that the *New York Time* within a spate of eight days that the nuclear incident lasted, used approximately 2600 column inches. He reported that as the incident escalated in news importance, editors gave it more space, front page placement (within more than half of each day's front stories), more pictures and diagrams.

Nduka and Andrew (2015) carried out a research on Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy in Niger delta. The researcher adopted the content analytical method to examine how Nigerian newspapers covered militancy in Niger delta using four dailies to include, *This Day, The Guardian, Vanguard* and *The Sun* Results showed that reports on militancy were accorded low prominence in the studied newspapers. Majority of the stories by 68.05% were tucked away in the inside pages labeled low prominence in the study. This figure represents over two-third of all editorial matters published on militancy. Stories that attracted high prominence that is, those carried on the front, back and editorial pages accounted for 28.82% while those carried in supplements, special sections and pull outs described as medium in the study were insignificant 3.13%. Results also showed that reports on militancy were frequently covered with a total of 576 stories within the study period. This number is considered significant given that there were other issues in the polity at the time, which also received press coverage. Thus the newspapers registered militancy in public and policy agenda. The frequency of reports on militancy helped draw global awareness to militancy and increased its salience among the public.

A study conducted by Rajeev (2006) lends credence to this research finding. In that study, it was found that Indiana press gave undue prominence to the 2002 Gujarat violence. However, this study saw a prominence given to religious crises-based stories within the study period, but not undue prominence as found in Rajeev's research.

In related development, Okoli (2011) in his study of mass media coverage of the Niger Delta crisis revealed that Channels Television gave a better report of the Niger Delta crisis than NTA. Okoli confirmed that unlike NTA, Channels Television was always reporting the crisis in their daily reports. Confirming Okoli's revelation, Aka (2011) found in his study that the media, particularly the broadcast media gave different dimension of coverage to the Niger Delta crisis.

Udoka (2008) observes that Nigerian media have over the years maintained favourable reportage of ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria, hence no empirical research has indicted the media in this regard. This finding equally contradicts the finding of Momoh et al (1987) on the role of the press that "Mischievous and irresponsible reportage and comments from certain sections of the press on religious issues actually heighten or promote religious riots or crises.

*f) Theoretical Framework*

For the purpose of this work, framing and agenda setting-theory were employed in explaining the phenomena under study.

*g) Framing Theory*

The framing idea, according to McQuail (2010: 350) has been attributed to Erving Goffman as the originator. According to Goffman (1974) a frame is needed to organize otherwise fragmentary items of experience or information. The idea of a 'frame' in relation to news has been widely and loosely used in place of terms such as 'frame of reference', 'context', 'theme', or even 'news angle'. In a journalistic context, stories are given meaning by reference to some particular 'news value' that connects one event with other similar ones. McQuail adds that "framing is a way of giving some overall interpretation to isolated items of fact".

The proponent of framing theory, according to Schufele and Tewksbury (2007), includes the sociologist, Goffman (1974), the economist and psychologist, Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984), the cognitive Linguists, Lakoff (2004) and communicators Entman (1991) and Iyenger (1991).

Erving Goffman in 1974 developed a theory of frame bold analysis. According to Baran and Davis he developed it as a "microscopic theory that focuses on how individuals learn to routinely make sense of their social world" (p.285).subsequently Kahneman and Tversky went a step further to develop their own theory based on framing effects which they called "prospect



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theory". They believed that "the prospect of a loss has greater impact on decision making than prospect of an equivalent gain". They argued that people's decision was based on the prospect of a loss or gain, which is equivalent to a risk aversion. From here onwards, several scholars and researchers conducted study to either dispute or affirm the findings of Kahneman and Tversky.

Framing theory is a theory of media effects which according to Goffman in Olarewaju (2017) deals with a schema of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or life experiences. The major thrust of the theory is that how an issue is characterized in reports can have influence on how it is understood by audiences (Ekwueme, 2013). The framing theory is applicable to media content research as well as media effects research. Framing in communication describes how news media coverage can shape mass opinion by using these particular frameworks to help guide their reader to understanding the issue (Druckman, 2001).

Baran and Davis (2006) defined framing theory as "an assertion that people expectations of the social world to make sense of that social world" (p.2850) Kalvas et al (2011) assert that framing theory "describes how the complexity of issues that are difficult to understand can be reduced" Entman (as cited in Schufele 1999) explains on a particular news event and then placed them within a specific field of meaning". This is the basis of framing theory.

The theory is relevant to this study since the study is out to ascertain the frames used in reporting operation python dance II and also the subject matters discussed in the reports. The theory will aid the researcher in making educated inferences as to the influence and the knowledge of audience members about military operations. It helps explain what issues about operation python dance II the public know and how they are making use of the information. This will help to a large extent; monitor the efforts of the Nigerian press in supporting and helping to achieve the Nigeria military objectives and by extension, the government's development goals with special emphasis on security goal.

*h) Agenda Setting Theory*

The agenda setting theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s. As defined by McCombs M and Reynolds A (2002) the agenda setting theory describes the "ability [of the news media] to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda." This signifies that when news article are promoted in terms of frequency and prominence and coverage, the more the audiences will give importance to it. Citing Shaw E.F. (1979):

> The agenda-setting theory says that because of newspapers, television, and other news media, people are aware or not aware, pay attention to or neglect, play up or downgrade specific features of the public scene. People tend to include or exclude from their cognitions what the media include or exclude from their content. People also tend to assign an importance to what they include that closely resembles the emphasis given to events, issues, and persons by the mass media. The agenda-setting function of the mass media implies a potentially massive influence whose full dimensions and consequences have yet to be investigated and appreciated. The media's role in a nation's political, economic, social, and intellectual life and their influence on a person's cultural and religious values, sexual and leisure norms, work and play behavior may be far greater than the agenda setting theory presently defines it. For the basic claim of agenda-setting theory is that people's understanding of much of social reality is copied from the media.

The import of this theory is that there is a close relationship between the manner in which the news media present issues and the importance accorded the issues by those exposed to the news. (Antigha 2005: 150). It implies that the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. In view of this Wogu (2008) believes that people consider those things reported in the media, and that major issues discussed by the society are introduced by the media.

Therefore applying the agenda setting theory to this study implies that frequent selection and projection of stories on operation python dance II will rouse public discussion on it which may prompt or influence government reaction and alignment to economic policies appropriately.

*i) Gaps in Literature*

From the above study reviewed by the researcher on newspaper coverage of military operations crisis and crime issues, a lot of salient points were noted which serve as the bouncing motivation for the present research.

In the reviews, a good number of the studies were conducted in different geographical locations outside Nigeria which constitute a dearth of data on the issues discussed in Nigeria. Chances could have been, that the locations in which these studies were carried out influenced the results gotten at the end of the research, this motivated the researcher to embark on the present study to fill the geographical gap and empirically make an enquiry to reveal data that are common to the Nigerian realities.

Another reason for the study as discovered from the review is the objectives. The present study seeks to do a frame analysis while most of the previous research works do not present data as to frames, they only did reportage or coverage of events/issues while neglecting



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the angles and subject matters through which the issue was reported. It should also be noted that, in search of literature, the researcher did not see any study that treated use of frames in OPD II coverage both within and outside Nigeria, thus this study seeks to fill that gap. Therefore, this study is relevant in our society today as many research efforts in mass media content have moved from the usual agenda setting to framing studies.

## VII. Methodology

*a) Research Design*

Since this study seeks to examine and analyze newspapers, the content analysis method is most appropriate and applicable to the study, in assessing the inherent frames and frequency of coverage given to the topic under discourse by the selected Nigerian dailies. Kerlinger 2000 (as cited in Wilmer and Dominick, 2011) defined content analysis as a "method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (p.156).

*b) Population of Study*

According to Uwakwe (2006). Population in a research work to be the universe, the totality of all subjects that are going to be studied. The study's population comprised of four Nigerian dailies (*Daily Trust, Daily Sun, The Guardian* and *The Nation newspapers)*. The population of Newspapers in Nigeria was considered based on defined criteria such as:

1. The newspaper selected must be daily.
2. It must have wide national circulation covering all geopolitical zones of the country.
3. Registered with the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NAPN).

The choice of four newspapers, *Daily Trust, Daily Sun, The Guardian* and *The Nation* were informed by the fact that they represent various parts of the country- West, East and North. Hence, it is to obtain a representative nature of the security care system in the country. The population encompasses the publication for the study period of selected Nigerian dailies that started from 15th September - 15th October 2017 which is the period the *operation python dance* exercise lasted. This means 31 total numbers of publications for each newspaper. Therefore, the population of editions for this study will be 31 multiplied by 4 which sum up to 124. Thus, a total number of 124 editions of *Daily Sun, Vanguard, Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers constitute the population for this study.

*c) The Sun*

This is a national newspaper published in Lagos. It is owned by Chief Orji Kalu, the former Governor of Abia state and prides itself as the "king of Nigeria's tabloid industry". It is a paper that thrives on sensational and salacious stories and can be tagged as of the highest circulating paper in Nigeria.

*d) The Guardian*

The Guardian is based in Lagos state and sees itself as "the flagship of the Nigerian press". Its publisher is Chief Alex Ibru who is a business magnate from delta state. The paper can be said to be influential and liberal in outlook.

*e) The Nation*

This is a daily newspaper published in Lagos published by Vintage Press Limited.

*f) Daily Trust*

This newspaper is based in Abuja and is the largest circulating newspaper in Northern Nigeria. It is owned by a group of young Nigerians and it is published by Media Trust Limited (MTL).

*g) Sample Size*

A sample is a subset of units from the entire population being studied (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, (2008, p. 96).

The sample size for this study was 124 editions of newspapers. 31 editions each of *Daily Sun, Vanguard, Daily Trust* and *The Nation* constituted the size. Seeing that the population was small and manageable, the census sampling method was adopted to allow the researcher study all the population elements. This helps eliminate every form of bias as all elements are studied.

*h) Sampling Technique*

The multi-staged sampling was adopted for this study. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafor and Okpanachi (2012, p. 190) "the multi-stage sampling technique requires the researcher to choose his samples in stages until he gets the required sample". The purposive sampling technique was used at the first stage to select four newspapers namely: *Daily Trust, The Sun, The Guardian and The Nation* newspapers from the daily circulating newspapers in the country based on- they represent various parts of the country- West, East and North. Hence, it is to obtain a representative nature of the security care system in the country.

In the second stage, a one-month period was purposively selected for the study. This is because the *Operation Python Dance II* officially lasted for the period of one month. Therefore, 15th September to 15th October 2017 was the period studied. The researcher in the third stage made use of the census sampling technique to arrive at the particular editions to be studied. Census sampling allows all elements in a given population to be studied. This made the researcher to pick all the elements in the population and studied them. Hence, all 124 editions in the population were picked to be studied. The census sampling method was adopted to allow the researcher study all the population elements. This helps eliminate every form of bias as all elements are studied.



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*i) Instrument of Data Collection*

The instrument used in collecting the data was code sheet. The code sheet is used in systematic data collection for content analytical research. The advantage of the code sheet which makes it suitable for this study lies in the fact that it has then benefit of converting generated data into easily understandable numerical value (Okoro, 2001).

*j) Method of data collection*

Data was generated from the selected newspapers through a detailed page-by-page review of the newspapers and coded on the prepared code sheet. This ensured easy, fast and accurate collection of data necessary for the study.

*k) Units of Analysis*

This is mainly for the content analysis. The unit of analysis refers to the editorial matters that the researcher intends to use for coding. The units are therefore classified to help analyze the data generated appropriately. The units of analysis are stated below;

Straight news

Features

Articles

Opinion/Commentary

Editorials

*Tools for Measurement:* For this study, the data collected were coded and analyzed under the following tools/unit measurements

1. Media
   1) The Sun
   2) Guardian
   3) The Nation
   4) Daily Trust
2. Frames: This describes the point of view from which Operation Python Dance II related reports in the newspapers are reported. It shows the areas which the media lay emphasis upon in their reports. For the purpose of this study, a combination of frames suggested by different authors will be adopted. For a story to be coded under a particular frame, the frame will have to be the primary frame in such story. This refers to the dominant frame used, this frame can be gotten from the headline or lead- these two aspects of an article have been seen to be the best pointers to the content of such article.

1) Human Interest Frame: The human interest frame includes "news reports which attempt to bring a human face or an angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem" (Cramer 2008, p. 54). For the purpose of this work the human interest frame will be seen as any story that emphasizes on the effects the operation python dance II has on the people, putting into consideration their feelings about the operation.

2) Economic loss/consequence frame: The frame focuses on the economic and financial implications of operation python dance II. These include stories on the economic effects of operation python dance II in terms of death, loss of properties and destruction of homes and businesses.

3) Attribution of responsibility frame: This frame shows how the media, (newspaper in this case) tie blame and responsibility as it relates to operation python dance II. The guiding questions here are: Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem? Does the story show that some level of the government is responsible for the issue? Does the story suggest solution to the problem? Does the story suggest an individual or a group in the society as responsible for the issue? Does the story suggest the problem require urgent action?

4) Reassurance Frame: This was used by Shih, Wijaya, and Brossard (2008) in their study of epidemic diseases. The frame expresses the idea that the public should not be worried about the effects of the operation. Stories that emphasize the readiness and/or successes of authorities in combating crimes are also included. The frame seeks to explain any action against the operation to allay societal fears. It shows how the crime/insecurity is being contained or combated.

5) Warning frames: This frame includes news reports that have a warning tone alerting people to the operation python dance II.

6) Political frames: frames that are related to political structure and the management of the country. E.g. political inclusion

7) Security frames: this are news that contain, insecurity, dissatisfaction by a particular group

8) Ethnic frame: news on tribalism and nepotism sectionalism as it affect the country

3. Prominence: This implies the level of attention given to the issue on selected newspaper placement of stories. Ohaja (2003, p.16) noted "…. a story displayed on the front page is most prominent than one tucked into the inside page. The ranking usually descends from (4) front page, to (3) back page, (2) centre spread and the least core (1) goes to other inside pages."

*3 (A) Front page:* Stories on the front page will be coded most prominent and ranked (4)

*3 (B) Back page:* Stories on back page ranked (3) also considered most prominent

*3 (C) Center spread:* This refers to stories in center page of the newspapers. Is ranked (2) and will be coded as most prominent.



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*3(D) Inside page:* These are stories tucked inside page of the newspapers and is coded as least prominent.

4. Volume: This refers to the amount of space devoted to stories related to the topic of discourse. This will be measured by the following-

*4(A) Full Page and above:* This refers to stories reported using full page of the newspaper. It will be coded as most important.

*4 (B) Half Page:* Refers to stories reported of OPD II reported using half page of the newspaper. It is also coded as most important.

*4 (C) Quarter Page:* This refers to stories reported using quarter page of the newspaper. It will be coded as least important.

*4(D) Below Quarter page:* This refers to stories reported below quarter page of the newspaper. It will be coded as least important.

5. Tone/Direction: This looks at the kind of words (tone) used in reporting OPD II. They are:

*5(a) Derogatory/Inflammatory/provocative:* This refers to stories of OPD II that are provocative, disrespectful, unkind, insulting, demeaning etc meant to hurt or instigate anger.

*5 (b) Expository/explanatory/educating:* This refers to stories of OPD II that tends to educate, inform, interpret or describe the OPD II operation to avoid misconception

*5(c) Compromising/collaborative/uniting:* Refers to stories of OPD II that are revealing or bringing together for a common purpose or action.

6. Interpretation: This are stories that afford the reader the opportunity of seeing other sides to a story by giving instances and providing background information other than just passing information. Hence interpretation looks at how in-depth the stories on OPD II are.

*6(a) Straight news:* This refers to the editorial matter on the pages of newspaper which goes straight to the point and reports events as they are. This was considered as a non- interpretative editorial matter seeing that it scratches only the surface of information.

*6(b) Editorials:* This is a story on OPD II, which voices the opinion of a particular newspaper organisation on the issue. It is most often garnished with background and quite detailed information which make it deeper than the straight news.

*6(c) Interviews:* These are stories written from interactions with prominent stakeholders on a particular issue (OPD II in this case), It goes beyond surface information dissemination duties as it is often laced with facts and figures from the experts.

*6(d) Feature articles:* These are detailed and long stories on OPD II authored by reporters to make clarifications and expatiate on the issue. Feature stories carry out the correlation function of the media.

*6(e) Opinion article/Column:* This refers to analyses offered by designated and versatile members of the public on the issue of OPD 11. It is detailed in most cases, it is therefore considered an interpretative editorial matter.

*l) Validity of Instruments*

It represents the extent to which the study design measures what it purports to measure (Ezeji, 2004). Here, the researcher's supervisor and two experts in the department of mass communication, UNN (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) and one in the statistics department through their wealth of knowledge in research made necessary corrections and adjustments that improved the instrument and ensure it measures properly what it is ought to measure.

*m) Reliability of measuring Instruments*

In content analysis, the inter-coder reliability test is done to test if the measuring instrument is reliable. Inter-coder reliability, according to Wimmer and Dominic (2011) refers to the levels of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using same coding instrument (p.171). Here, two independent coders were trained to code *The Guardian and Daily Sun* Newspapers respectively of the sample to check for inter-coder agreement. The formula is given thus:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree, and $N_1$ and $N_2$ are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder respectively.

The inter-coder reliability test was coded thus:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2(21)}{24+24} = \frac{2x21}{48} = \frac{42}{48} = 0.87$$

The measuring instrument is considered reliable because a relatively high inter-coder co- efficient of .87 was achieved by the two independent coders following the coding of items from the stories of Operation Python Dance from the four selected newspapers after some minor adjustment was made. This is in consonance with the submission of Wimmer & Dominick (2000, p.154) that "most published content analysis typically report a minimum inter-coder reliability coefficient of about .75 or above.

## VIII. Data Presentation and Analysis

*a) Sample Description*

The study sought to analyze Nigeria mainstream newspapers' framing of the operation python dance II in south-east Nigeria. 56 editions of four Nigerian newspapers- *The Guardian, Daily Sun, Daily* Trust and *The Nation*- were accessed and analyzed.



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Data generated were presented in simple frequency/percentage tables. The study was for a period of one (1) month. Out of the 124 editions sampled 62 operation python dance II related reports were found, hence the analysis will be based on the 62 reports found in 47 editions of the selected newspapers. From the newspapers accessed, it was found out that *Daily Sun* had 22 stories in all; *Daily Trust* had 12*; The Nation* had 16 while *Guardian* had 12 Operation Python Dance II related reports.

*Table 1:* Distribution of Newspaper edition studied

| S/N | Newspapers | No. of Editions | No. of Editions With Story | No. of Editions Without Story | No. of Stories |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Daily Trust | 31 | 9 | 22 | 12 |
| 2 | The Nation | 31 | 11 | 20 | 16 |
| 3 | The Guardian | 31 | 12 | 19 | 12 |
| | Daily Sun | 31 | 15 | 16 | 22 |
| | Total | 124 | 47 | 77 | 62 |

This table shows the number of the edition of newspapers studied for this research. It also shows number of stories gotten from the 124 editions.

## IX. Data Presentation and Analysis

*Research Question 1:* What is the dominant frame used in reporting operation python dance II?

*Table 2:* Distribution according to Dominant frame

| Frames | Newspapers | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily Sun | | Daily Trust | | The Nation | | Guardian | | | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Human Interest | 6 | 27 | 2 | 17 | 8 | 50 | 6 | 50 | 22 | 35 |
| Economic loss/ Consequence | 3 | 14 | - | - | 1 | 6 | - | - | 4 | 6 |
| Attribution of responsibility | 6 | 27 | - | - | 2 | 13 | 3 | 25 | 11 | 18 |
| Reassurance | 2 | 9 | 1 | 8 | - | - | - | - | 3 | 5 |
| Warning | 2 | 9 | | | - | - | - | | 2 | 3 |
| Security | 3 | 14 | 5 | 47 | 3 | 18 | 3 | 25 | 14 | 23 |
| Political | - | | - | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ethnic | - | - | 4 | 33 | 2 | 13 | - | - | 6 | 10 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 62 | 100 |

Table 2 above shows that The Human interest was used more to report OPD II in the select newspapers. This is evident as 35% of the total stories employed the human interest. The security frame and attribution of responsibility frame were next to the human interest. The implication of this finding is that majority of the reports bordered on the interest and security implications of the operation python dance on the Nigerian state and/or the south east region and IPOB.



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*Research Question 2:* What is the level of prominence given to stories on operation python dance II?

*Table 3:* Distribution based on the level of prominence given to operation python dance II stories

| Prominence | Newspapers | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily Sun | | Daily Trust | | The Nation | | Guardian | | | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Front page | 9 | 41 | 3 | 25 | 2 | 13 | 2 | 17 | 16 | 26 |
| Back page | 3 | 14 | - | - | 3 | 19 | - | - | 6 | 10 |
| Centre spread | - | | - | - | 1 | 6 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Inside page | 10 | 45 | 9 | 75 | 10 | 62 | 10 | 83 | 39 | 62 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 62 | 100 |

Data in table 3 reveal the prominence given to Operation python dance II related stories based on page placement. It was discovered that majority (62%) of the reports came on the inside pages of the newspapers while 16 were on the front cover; 6 at the Back cover page and 1 as a centre story. This implies that not enough was given to OPD II reports as they were hidden on the inside pages of the newspapers. This shows the level of importance attached to issues such as this by the media.

*Research Question 3:* What is the length/volume of OPD II related reports?

*Table 4:* Distribution of reports according to volume

| Volume | Newspapers | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily Sun | | Daily Trust | | The Nation | | Guardian | | | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Full page & above | 7 | 32 | 3 | 25 | - | - | 1 | 8 | 11 | 17 |
| Half page | 7 | 32 | 5 | 42 | 6 | 38 | 5 | 42 | 23 | 37 |
| Quarter page | 6 | 27 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 31 | 2 | 17 | 14 | 23 |
| Below Quarter page | 2 | 9 | 3 | 25 | 5 | 31 | 4 | 33 | 14 | 23 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 62 | 100 |

Data in table 4 above show that majority of the stories consumed a reasonable amount of space in the dailies as half page had the highest percentage of 37% while full page stories had 17% of the total reports. Only a few (23% each) were given as low as quarter page or below among the reported stories on OPD II. The implication of this is that the news media did well in making information on the issue sufficient, thereby getting the readers armed with proper and full information to make informed choices, decisions and opinions due to abundance of information.

*Research Question 4:* What kind of tone was used to report stories on operation python dance II?

*Table 5:* Distribution of OPD II stories according to tone/direction used

| Interpretative Content | Newspapers | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily Sun | | Daily Trust | | The Nation | | Guardian | | | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Derogatory/Inflammatory/ provocative | 5 | 23 | 3 | 25 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 19 |
| Expository/explanatory/ educating | 10 | 45 | 9 | 75 | 12 | 75 | 8 | 67 | 39 | 63 |
| Compromising/ collaborative/uniting | 7 | 32 | - | - | 1 | 6 | 3 | 25 | 11 | 18 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 62 | 100 |



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Table 5 above reveals that none of the stories on OPD II described the operation as one which was uniting the country based on the adjectives used to qualify the operation. It is evident from the table that 63% of the stories used languages that were describing the operation and educating the masses about the operation which implies that the reports were geared towards making audience members (who are readers here) get proper understanding of the operation in order to make informed and proper decisions cum opinions on the issue. From the table, it was also noticed that a significant and an 'unignorable' percentage of OPD II reports made use of derogatory and inflammatory words/adjectives to describe the operation with the *Daily Sun* newspaper taking the lead among other selected newspapers.

*Research Question 5:* What is the level of interpretation given to Operation Python Dance II reportage?

*Table 6:* Distribution according to level of interpretation

| Interpretative Content | Newspapers | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily Sun | | Daily Trust | | The Nation | | Guardian | | | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Straight news stories | 6 | 27 | 2 | 17 | 7 | 44 | 3 | 25 | 18 | 29 |
| Feature stories | 7 | 32 | 2 | 17 | 5 | 31 | 5 | 42 | 19 | 31 |
| Editorials | - | - | 1 | 8 | 1 | 6 | - | - | 2 | 3 |
| Interview | 1 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Column/Opinion | 8 | 36 | 7 | 58 | 3 | 19 | 4 | 33 | 22 | 35 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 62 | 100 |

Data from the above table show that OPD II was reported in the media as columns/opinion stories which had the highest percentage (35%) of the total reports, closely followed by feature stories with 31%. The implication of this is the fact that stories on the OPD II in the newspapers were interpretative seeing that interpretative genres, put together had a higher percentage figure than straight news stories. It is also noticed from the table that only one editorial was written that was related to OPD II.

## X. Discussion of Major Findings

The findings will be discussed based on the research questions.

*Research Question One:* What is the dominant frame used in reporting operation python dance II?

For this research question, out of the 124 stories related to OPD II studied and analyzed, 22 (35%) of the stories revealed that the human interest frame was the dominant frame of reportage used in portraying the operation python dance II. Eight frames in all were drafted to be used in measuring the dominant frame of reportage, but the human interest frame had the highest figure closely followed by the security frame 21 (23%) and attribution of responsibility frames with 18%.

Majority of the stories stressed on issues of the consequences of the operation to the security of the nation. The reports x-rayed how the operation will affect the lives, security and properties in Nigeria either positively or negatively. Some of the writers even went further to project the aftermath effect of the operation security-wise. It was discovered that the security of lives and properties was paramount in the mind of the media in the reportage of the OPD II in south-east Nigeria. This is a commendable attempt, as the political or ethnic frames were not paramount amongst the dominant frames. The writers showed concern for human and security value to the nation by emphasizing on the need to tread softly to avoid a pogrom or mayhem or a repeat of the civil war. The security frame majorly talked about the operation as a face-off between the federal government and the IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra).

Findings, as shown in the table reveal that besides the security frame, the human interest and attribution of responsibility frames were quite dominant; receiving a fair share of OPD II related reports with 18%. It was seen in the reports how the citizens were affected by the operation while the reports on the attribution of responsibility frame showed how the writers traded blame and a couple of mudslinging cases here and there. The government was accused of using the operation to remove and deal with the threat posed by Biafra while others left the issue and were blaming the government for the whereabouts of Kanu as a result of the OPD II activities. Further findings showed how that the reassurance and ethnic frames had 5% and 10% total coverage each and the warning frame having 3% while other frames- political, economic loss/ consequence – did not have any report at all.

Just as it is noted that framing influences how the reader thinks about an issue presented by the media not by making aspects of the events more salient, but



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invoking schemas that influence the interpretation of the information presented (Sheufele in Melkote, 2009, p. 549), the dominant frame used in the reportage of OPD II helps us to understand the perception of the operation by readers. In the coverage of issues like this, media framing, according to the framing theory has the ability and almost always influences the perception of the audience. The implication of this finding is that the human interest and security frame was used more in covering the OPD II and hence, the wellbeing of the citizens was a major factor in determining the slant of the report. From this, the readers have been exposed to the fact that there are security implications of the operation and their security matters a lot, even to the media who ought to be socially responsible.

*Research Question Two:* What is the level of prominence given to stories on operation python dance II?

The answer to this research question is shown in table 3. Findings showed that there was little prominence given to OPD II issues as the majority (62%) of the reports were hidden on the inside pages of the newspapers while front cover had 26%, back cover 10% and center spread also had 2%. For this study, for a story to be adjudged prominent, it must be on the front cover, center page or back page of the newspaper. Seeing that most of the stories were buried on the inside pages of the newspapers, the newspapers are adjudged not to have given proper prominence to OPD II. However, this finding is not an aberration from previous findings as it corroborates the findings of Owolabi (2014); Fadairo, Fadairo, and Aminu, (2014); Ekwueme et al, (2017) who discovered that majority of the stories are hidden on the inside pages of newspapers. The focal point of every newspaper is the front page and every reader gets to see the front page stories, hence, a story that is not reported on the front pages of the newspaper may eventually not get to be seen by a reader, therefore causing them to lose important information of the issue at hand. So many things are always begging for the attention of the audience hence, the possibility that he may just glance through front and back page stories and drop the paper to attend to other 'important' issues. It is because of the above that Ukonu (2007) has averred that the front page is the face of the newspaper and it is built to attract the reader. From this, chances are that majority of the stories on OPD II buried on the inside pages of the newspapers were not eventually read by the readers. If they were not read, what is now the essence of reporting it?

The level of importance attached to the story by the media is almost the same level of importance the readers attach to such issues. When readers survey the headlines and do not find a story on the OPD II, they eventually may tend to see it as an inconsequential issue seeing that the media did not attach importance to them on the cover pages. This is the postulation of the agenda-setting theory which has prominence as one of its major parameters of measuring the agenda-setting power of the media. Similar to this finding is Nduka and Andrew (2015) research on Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy in Niger delta. Results showed that reports on militancy were accorded low prominence in the studied newspapers. Majority of the stories by 68.05% were tucked away in the inside pages labeled low prominence in their study.

The implication of this finding is that the newspapers did not do well to properly set agenda on the issue of OPD II seeing the level of low prominence given to OPD II related stories. It must be noted that Folarin (1998) has noted prominence as a major element of the agenda-setting theory. The finding is much different from that of Krieghbaum conducted in the late 1970s. Krieghbaum (1979), He reported that editors gave more space, front page placement (within more than half of each day's front stories), more pictures and diagrams. Thereby, according the story news importance.

*Research Question Three:* What is the volume of OPD II related reports?

This is another parameter used in measuring the level of importance and significance attached to stories on OPD II. Findings here showed that majority of the reports were reported using full page and half pages with 17% and 37% respectively. This means that the issue was given importance based on the amount of space devoted to the stories.

The amount of space devoted to an issue shows how the newspaper values such issue. The volume of reports communicates to the reader the importance of such issue because if a story is below a quarter page story, chances are that the reader may ignore the report because it communicates a trivial and non-important issue which he should not waste his time on. The newspapers, in this case, are to be commended for devoting a sufficient amount of space to OPD II stories. It shows a great deal of importance attached to the issue by the editorial boards of the newspaper organizations. The newspapers did well to allocate a sizable portion of space to OPD II reports. The implication of this finding is that the newspapers gave prominence based on volume to OPD II. This shows that the selected newspapers helped in attaching major importance to the stories.

The finding is not much different from that of Krieghbaum conducted in the late 1970s. Krieghbaum (1979), He reported that editors gave more space, front page placement (within more than half of each day's front stories), more pictures and diagrams. Thereby, according the story news importance.



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*Research Question Four:* What kind of tone/direction was used to report stories on operation python dance II?

The qualification based on tone given to stories in the media goes a long way in determining the thoughts that will keep ringing on the minds of the readers. The tone used here describes the adjectives used to describe OPD II and the generality of the tone of such report. Three measuring parameters were developed for this research question- Derogatory, Educating and Uniting tone. Findings showed that the stories were more focused on educating the audience on the issue with a percentage figure of 63% while the derogatory variable followed with a 19% of total reports and the third variable had 18%.

Stories on OPD II were found educating, this is not surprising as a good number of educative and informative content were available as discussed in research question two above. This shows the neutrality of the words used in reporting and describing the OPD II exercise in the southeast. Majority of the reports were neutral in language-not derogatory and not uniting or supporting the OPD II. Despite the fact that majority of the stories were found to be quite neutral. 19% of all stories used derogatory and incendiary languages to describe the OPD II. Words like illegal, pogrom, violence, massacre, face-off, were used to describe the exercise in the southeast.

The fact that there was neutrality in the majority of the reports does not mean that the significant presence of incendiary and inflammatory languages in the reports should be ignored. The reason for a significant number of inflammatory languages could be because newspaper organizations are business outfits that are profit-oriented and it is a known fact that negativities capture the attention of readers, hence the quest to sell their papers could be the reason for the negativity. The implication of this finding is that negative sentiments may be pronounced among the readers towards the exercise seeing that negativity most times has more influence than neutrality.

*Research Question Five:* What is the level of interpretation given to Operation Python Dance II reportage?

The interpretation level given to a report shows the extent of educative content inherent in such a report. The correlation and educative functions of the media are functions that should be upheld properly if the Medias must perform her social responsibility role of educating the public properly. The level of interpretation can easily be got from the genre of stories used in reporting the issue at hand. Hence, findings here show that the reportage of OPD II was interpretative. In table 3, it is shown how the interpretative genres- features, columns/opinion, editorials, and interviews- put together had a higher percentage (71%) than straight news reports which had 29%. It was revealed that only the column/opinion genre had a higher figure (35%) than straight news with 29%. This is not a popular finding as it contradicts a study by Ekwueme et al (2017) that showed the little depth and lack of investigative, in-depth and follow-up reports on corrupt practices in Nigeria which they studied.

Interpretative reporting is one which explains, elucidates and displays news behind the news with analysis to the reader Ekwueme (2014). It explains the correlative function of the media in that it makes the reader understand the story properly and shows the reader how the issue at hand affects him or his environment. Interpretative reports educate the audience on the issue. Seeing that the media just report issues as straight news due to space and events, it has always been the reports not being interpretative and educative, but the present study has upturned this fact and shows that the Nigerian print media can be socially responsible by providing the education function properly.

The reports on OPD II were, to a large extent, interpretative and this is a commendable feat by the media houses because the availability of educative content and not just informative content on OPD II in the media will help the audience members to be fully armed with the information they need for living through the operation seeing that the media are a veritable source of educational content to the public on national issues as this. This finding implies that the news media performed well their function in educating the readers and they are aware of the proper information from a trusted source and not just hearsays.

## XI. Summary

The study was carried out to discover empirical evidence as to the framing of the operation python dance II in four Nigerian national dailies. *Daily Sun, Daily Trust, The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers were analyzed for a period of 1 month to ascertain how the media portrayed the OPD II exercise in the south eastern part of Nigeria. The study sought to achieve five major objectives which bordered on the dominant frame used in reporting the OPD II exercise; The Level of interpretation of the reports; The prominence attached to OPD II reports based on page placement; The tone of the language used in reporting and the volume of OPD II reports.

The content analysis was carried out from 15th September to 15th October, 2017, which is the month of the operation. A total of 124 editions of newspapers constituted the sample size for this, meaning 31 editions per newspaper. A page by page review of the selected editions was done to get at the reports needed for analysis. The analysis of the newspapers generated a total of 62 stories in 47 editions from the 124 editions sampled. This means that 77 editions did not carry stories related to OPD II exercise in the south east.



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Findings from the study revealed that the human interest security frame was the dominant frame of reportage with 35% of total reports while the security and attribution of responsibility frames had a considerable amount of stories with 23% and 18% respectively. Further findings from the analysis revealed that the stories on OPD II were interpretative as majority (71%) of the stories were reported using the interpretative genres of editorials, feature stories, columns/opinions and interviews.

The study also discovered that the newspapers attached little prominence to OPD II stories based on page placement as majority (62%) of the stories were buried on the inside pages of the papers. It was also discovered from the study that majority of the tone of the language used in reportage were explanatory and descriptive connoting neutrality of tone while a significant percentage had derogatory and inflammatory tone usage.

Finally, the study discovered that the length and volume of stories on OPD II were quite high as majority of the reports came as full page and half page stories, signifying a high level of importance attached to the reported stories. It was also noticed from the research that majority of the reports on OPD II came during the month of the exercise as no story or report was found for even awareness in the period preceding September. Majority of the stories were found during the exercise and a few after the exercise. From the study, it was also observed that over 85% the stories were in one way or the other connected to IPOB and/or Nnamdi Kanu.

## XII. Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following conclusions-

a) The media were very concerned about the wellbeing of the citizens due to the fact that the security frame was the most dominant alongside the human interest frame. The stories were quite low on political partisanship.
b) The media did not give prominence to the exercise as they should have done. This is because of the scarcity of reports on OPD II that out of 124 editions of newspapers, only 47 editions carried stories related to OPD II and only 62 stories were carried. Coming to the few reports given, the media placed majority of these stories on the inside pages of the newspapers, signifying little prominence. Although prominence was given in the length of the stories. But this is insufficient as those stories are on the inside pages of the newspapers which may not be seen, how will the volume of information be accessed if it is not even seen by the reader.
c) There was no awareness on the pages of the newspapers as to the commencement of OPD II as no story- either press release or report from a press conference by the army- was found in the newspapers before the commencement of the exercise.
d) That majority of the OPD II related stories were based on its relationship and connection to IPOB and Nnamdi Kanu.
e) The proximity of an event to a news organization's political origin affects coverage. This is demonstrated by the fact that *Daily Sun* had the highest number of stories on the exercise since it is a south-eastern newspaper.
f) There was a significant amount of inflammatory appellations given to the exercise and this may not be unconnected to the little or no awareness of the exercise as the newspaper did not carry any story to prepare the minds of the audience for the commencement of the OPD II.

Given the conclusions above, it is worthy to state here that the newspapers did fairly in their reportage of OPD II exercise and almost failed in their social responsibility function to the society.

## XIII. Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations are made:

a) The media and the military should, in subsequent exercises like this do well to prepare the members of the society for an upcoming exercise by carrying public service announcements on the issue while the military should organize press conferences on issues like this to avoid misconceptions and create awareness.
b) The media should try to give prominence to sensitive issues of national importance like this by giving them front page placement to draw the attention of readers to the issue. Through this, the people will be able to get information to make proper decisions.
c) That the media should train and retrain journalists on issues reporting sensitive issues like this to avoid the broiling of crisis from the media.
d) The journalists should be open-minded and report objectively on issues like this, not minding whose ox is gored.
e) There is also the need to integrate "Oramedia"- town crier system, folk theatre, traditional murals, and media, village squares, and market places, with modern media and employ them systematically for rural and urban, the present concentration of mass media in the urban areas and the focus on security matters in one part of the country should be de-emphasized.

## XIV. Limitation of Study

In the course of the research, a couple of difficulties were met both methodological and physical



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limitations. From the aspect of the method, content analysis only does well to analyze the manifest content of the newspapers and not the awareness level of the knowledge of the audience. It is based on this that this method alone may not be sufficient for a study like this since the audience knowledge level needs to be known before proper inferences can be made. The study also studied just 56 editions of four out of over 200 newspapers in Nigeria, this limits the easy generalizability of the study in the sense that this number may not suffice for all the newspapers, even though the number was chosen for easy manageability of research.

From the aspect of the physical limitations, the researcher encountered lack of materials, especially newspapers. This ked to many travels to Abuja FCT and Enugu to source for newspapers and since there is no available data base for newspapers in Nigeria, the analysis that was done was quite limited. If there was a database like the LexisNexis database used by foreign authors, a word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase analysis would have been possible and comparison of results possible.

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